

## RARE AIR AND SOME ORPHAN CAR HISTORY

Keith Wahl, M.D.



When was the last time a car you fancied to own showed up at your local car show and ended up in your garage a week later? That's exactly what happened to avid Studebaker Collector and San Diego County Chapter President, Keith Wahl, M.D.!

In the American car collector world, you have your Ford, Chevy and Mopar die-hard fanatics – and then there are the indomitable “orphan car” collectors--notable amongst them are the rabid “Studebaker Addicts.” Many of these “addicts” abide by the message contained in that famous 60's Lay's potato chip advertising campaign slogan –“Bet you can't have just one!” For the afflicted, Studebakers are like the irresistible potato chips. This philosophy undoubtedly accounts for a worldwide and national membership of over 10,000 aficionados with numerous chapters and a national museum in Studebaker's hometown of South Bend, Indiana. New Old Stock and quality reproduction parts are still available from many vendors and collectors of the legendary marque.

Historically, the company went from creating wagon wheels, found on the venerable Conestoga Wagon (whose settlers crossed the daunting plains of our burgeoning country to make their fortune in the California Gold Rush) -- to the Bonneville Salt Flats. Studebaker's “Hail Mary” production attempt to save the company with the dramatic Raymond Loewy designed Avanti in 1963, set numerous land speed records as the fastest production car of that year. Racing legend, Andy Granatelli's use of “STP” Motor Oil Treatment in the speed trails made it a well-known additive brand.

Alas, company longevity was not to be, as the South Bend factory closed its doors in the summer of 1964, ceasing production and moving to Hamilton, Ontario. The last of the original South Bend, Indiana, Studebaker- produced cars did see some unique models develop, to wit, the svelte, handsome 1964 Daytona convertible, designed by Brookes Stevens (who went on to form his own company – Excalibur Motor Cars with the Mercedes inspired Excalibur Roadster). Historically, Studebaker, was the initial American distributor and sales agency for Mercedes Benz.

Hankering for a late model convertible Studebaker, the Daytona model caught Wahl's fancy (who has 4 other Studebakers). He had become even more smitten by the last year production convertible models, one of only 416 produced in South Bend and a mere 12 manufactured in the Golden Sand Color on the car, which was to become his. By great coincidence, one of the last entrants to adorn the field of the Chapter's "Cool Classic Car Show", was the very Daytona Convertible Wahl had been pining for and was owned, happily, by a local San Diego resident. Wahl, in charge of parking, escorted the car to its designated spot and graciously thanked the owner, profusely, for bringing the very car that he was destined to purchase -- which he did, just one week later!

Although the car was pristine in cosmetic appearance and presenting few total miles on it (driven a paltry 2000 miles in the last twenty years), a comprehensive mechanical re-conditioning was required, including complete loom re-wire, changing out the carburetor as well as manifold, replacing all the gaskets and bushings, an extensive refurbishment of the brake system, including drums, and wheel cylinders, along with new brake lines. Wahl added some custom touches, including an upgraded modern radio, console, and full tonneau cover. Garnering numerous thumbs ups and smiles whenever on the road, wistfully, the last car parked at the San Diego Studebaker Chapter Car show has found a new local home!

I was able to track down the car's prior ownership history and learned the following:

- **10/25/1963 SOLD BY RICE MOTORS- GREAT FALLS, MONTANA TO RENT A CAR INC. GREAT FALLS, MONTANA \*\*USED AS RENTAL CAR AT AIRPORT ORIGINAL SELLING PRICE \*\*\$2,797**
- **2<sup>ND</sup> OWNER PARTS MANAGER AT RAMBLER DEALERSHIP IN GREAT FALLS MONTANA- HE MOVED TO SPOKANE, WASHINGTON- PURCHASE PRICE UNKNOWN**
- **JUNE 1990 - 3<sup>RD</sup> OWNER - GIL SHEFLY - SPOKANE WASHINGTON PURCHASE PRICE UNKNOWN**
- **1991<sup>4</sup>TH OWNER - DON SHAW - PRIEST RIVER, IDAHO - PURCHASED PRICE \*\* \$4,000**
- **1996 5<sup>TH</sup> OWNER - GERALD BLOUNT- BORING, OREGON - PURCHASED PRICE \*\* \$6,500**
- **2002 6<sup>TH</sup> OWNER - JAMES DUDEN- CLOVIS, NEW MEXICO PURCHASED ON EBAY PRICE \*\* \$7,600**
- **2003<sup>7</sup>TH OWNER - JAY SVIDAL - PURCHASED ON EBAY PRICE \*\* \$9,300**
- **OCTOBER 22, 2021 8<sup>TH</sup> OWNER - KEITH WAHL - SEEN AT A LOCAL CAR SHOW AND PURCHASED FROM MR. SVIDAL - SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA (LIVES 12 MILES FROM THE NEWEST OWNER)**